

## 54Testimony of

Michael Freimuth, Executive Director

Capital Region Development Authority

In support of

**Raised HB 5184**

### **An Act Extending the Boundaries of the Capital City Economic Development District**

February 19, 2016

On behalf of the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA), I wish to express our agency's support for **Raised House Bill 5184, An Act Extending the Boundaries of the Capital City Economic Development District.**

As you may be aware, CRDA is the successor agency to the former Capital City Economic Development Authority (CCEDA), which was established to build out the Adriaen's Landing District, including the Convention Center and Front Street. That task, largely completed in 2012 led to the reconstituting of the Agency, its board and its mission into CRDA.

Besides managing the major state entertainment venues including the XL Center, Pratt & Whitney Stadium at Rentschler Field and the Convention Center/Front Street area, CRDA has also been engaged with a variety of projects geared to renew the downtown Hartford business district including the reconstruction of a variety of state office complexes and the creation of new housing units.

Our primary district covers the downtown Hartford area, stretching roughly from just north of Interstate 84, down to the Colt facility along Interstate 91, generally westward to the State Capitol building, and returning to the east along Farmington and Asylum Avenues to the Connecticut River. We can also participate in projects elsewhere within the City of Hartford at its request and in the seven towns that abut Hartford at the request of those communities. Prior to FY16, however, we were not authorized to utilize funds for 'capital city economic development projects' outside of the main downtown target area.

The CRDA Board has considered the possibilities to expand its targeted district for its work, including opportunities in neighborhoods adjoining the downtown Hartford central business district and areas along the Connecticut River to compliment activity there.

Last session, the General Assembly authorized \$20 million in State bond funds in both FY16 and FY17 for CRDA to finance projects, including grants-in-aid for public infrastructure, outside the boundaries of our district, but within the City of Hartford. For FY16, \$10 million of these funds are reserved for projects in the new federally-designated Promise Zone;

As we have worked over the last three years, we have noticed the need and opportunity to also engage in development around our assets in East Hartford and began to explore the concept with the Town. Raised Bill 5184 proposes to extend the CRDA capital city economic development project area to include an area of East Hartford along the river extending to the area of Rentschler Field/UTC Pratt & Whitney facilities for CRDA to participate.

CRDA strongly supports this legislation and we look forward to working with the Town of East Hartford to advance a variety of projects that they've deemed important and critical to the Town's long term economic health and to be able to utilize our technical and staff support to bring them into fruition. Potential projects include work in the Founder's Plaza area, opportunities in and around Goodwin College, in-fill investments on Main Street and work at the Rentschler Field/UTC campus.

I would be happy to discuss this legislation further with Committee members and hope that you will not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank You.

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